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ABSTRACT

For student success in reading achievement, recognition needs must be met--each person desires to be recognized for things well done and for improvement over previous performances. This paper discusses how this can be done in the teaching of reading. The paper first enumerates and reports on selected past methods of reading instruction: initial teaching alphabet (ITA); programmed learning in reading instruction; and linguistic procedure approach. It then considers success in reading and outlines tools for learners to use in developing skills to become good readers. The paper suggests some ways to recognize learners and discusses holism in the reading curriculum, either in the whole language approach, in individualized reading, or in use of the experience chart. It then discusses how to harmonize the two approaches in reading instruction, word attack skills and holism. (NKA)

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Meeting Recognition Needs of Students in Reading.

by Marlow Ediger

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M. Ediger

MEETING RECOGNITION NEEDS OF STUDENTS IN READING

For student success in reading achievement, recognition needs must be met. Each person desires to be recognized for things well done. Improvement over previous performances also deserves to be recognized. Individuals do not desire to be a nobody, not known for any capabilities or talents. But students individually do possess something to contribute to the class and in society that has worth and value. The reading teacher needs to draw out from students that which is salient, significant, and has intrinsic worth. This can definitely be done in the teaching of reading.

Selected Past Methods Emphasized in the Teaching of Reading

There are methods of reading instruction that have been advocated or are still used today, since the author became a professor of education in 1962. The following are examples:

1. The Initial Teaching alphabet (ITA). The ITA was brought over from the United Kingdom in 1959. In my graduate class, summer of 1963, was a student who later became Assistant Superintendent of Schools in Arnold, Missouri which used the ITA on the first grade level. He was a very strong advocate of the ITA with its 44 graphemes that were to equal 44 separate phonemes. The ITA attempted to simplify the traditional English sound/symbol relationships with consistent grapheme/phoneme symbols. There were 19 letters that looked exactly the same when comparing ITA and traditional letters of the alphabet. This left 25 ITA symbols which were quite or somewhat unique. The ITA had no capital letters which further simplified their code. It has not been used in any public school since the latter 1970s. A major reason for its failure was the transition that first graders needed to make from ITA to traditional symbols (Tiedt, 1983). ITA test results did indicate positive gains in their phonetic system of instruction which was not carried through at later grades with transitional problems from ITA to traditional spelling of words. The initial gains made for feelings of personal recognition.

2. programed learning in reading instruction. During the early 1960s, the author when supervising student teachers in Ottumwa, Iowa, became very familiar with programed reading. Programed reading followed behavioral psychology tenets of B. F. Skinner. Students read a short selection from the basal and responded to a multiple choice test item covering that which had been read. The answer was covered until after the student responded to the multiple choice items. Immediately after, the learner could uncover the answer to check his/her response in the basal textbook being used. If correct, the student felt rewarded. If incorrect, the learner saw the correct answer and was ready to read the

next short sequential paragraph. Programed reading items were very carefully sequenced in pilot studies so that students using their program of instruction would make very few errors when responding to multiple choice items. Positive reinforcement was used here to make for learner success and personal recognition.Teachers in Ottumwa, Iowa system voted to disband this program of reading instruction in the middle 1970s. Programed reading is highly structured by the programmer in developing the read, respond, check sequential system for students to follow in reading (Ediger, 1997, 41-45).

3. a third approach in reading instruction emphasized a linguistic procedure. There are several schools of linguistic thinking. One school stressed a consistent patterns method (See Leonard Bloomfield and Clarence Barnhardt (1963) and Charles C. Fries (1964) whereby young readers would begin reading instruction by studying words which pattern. A well recognized pattern emphasized the "an" ending of a word family. There are many words in this pattern, such as ban, can, Dan, Fan, Jan, man, Nan, pan, ran, tan, and van. A first grade reader may then learn to substitute an initial consonant letter to make a new word, such as substitute the initial letter "b" in "ban" to the letter "c' to make the word "can." It is difficult to use meaningful words in a complete sentence using a linguistic approach. The following are examples of words in the "ban" family that could be used to make sentences, or perhaps a paragraph:

1. Dan and Jan ran with a pan and fan. There are words herein that do not pattern as consistently as the "ban" family of words, such as "and" and "a." However, the pattern is close. The reading teacher can make up many sentences in which words follow a pattern, such as in the "ban" family of words.

2. Nan can fan tan van. This sentence may not be too meaningful, but the words herein do pattern well.

Sequentially, more irregularly spelled words become a part of the young reader's reading curriculum (Ediger, 1988, 24-25). The patterns approach became more common in use in the spelling curriculum as compared to reading. There are several reasons why the reading curriculum did not incorporate a strong patterns approach in teaching and learning:

1. it is difficult to write rational sentences using patters only, within a sentence.

2. it becomes very difficult to put selected commonly used words into a pattern including though, thought, through, cough, rough, and bough. Each of these words had the "ough" element, but the pronunciation differs, even with commonly used words. A further example pertains to seventeen ways to spell the "ough" sound as in "through." These words include too, to, two, blue, rheumatism, flew, and

lieu.

3. it is rather common for students to say, "People do not speak that way."

4. it is common for students to speak in meaningful sentences rather than using words which pattern.

5. it can be quite common for classroom teachers to have students change the initial consonant in word and come up with a new word, or to provide words which rhyme with another word. Elements of linguistic thinking are being used then. Bloomfield, Barnhardt, and Fries did leave a worthwhile contribution to reading and more so in the study of correct spelling of words with a patterns approach.

Success in Reading

Students do not like to feel as being failures, but rather be successful in the curriculum. The reading teacher as a goal must establish new, challenging objectives for student attainment and yet these objectives are achievable. In an era of having high expectations for learner achievement, the teacher needs to be realistic in what each student can achieve. The objectives can be too difficult. Witness a test given to teachers in which 59% passed (Flippo and Riccards, 2000). The 41% of teachers who failed the test must feel very depressed and worried over this occurrence. It seems inconceivable that such a high rate of failure on a single test would be possible. Tests, however, can be written at a complexity level whereby almost all fail or written at a level in which nearly all pass with high test scores. Thus when teaching, the objectives should clearly be motivating for learners to achieve, but not be overwhelmingly complex where the failure rate is high.

Success in school and in society is dependent upon being able to do well. The individual needs to use his/her abilities and talents to pursue, achieve, and grow! The reading curriculum is no exception. Students need to be successful in achieving each objective that is a component part of reading. Even more so, the learner needs to be successful with holism in reading for comprehension and understanding. Gleaning ideas from reading is the ultimate goal of reading instruction. Phonics and syllabication, among other skills, should be taught as tools for learners to become competent readers. Success in becoming proficient readers provides recognition for learners. This puts a tremendous burden on the teacher to assist each student to do well in reading. With a large class size, it becomes increasingly difficult to guide learners individually to achieve optimally. Further problems here involve a lack of suitable library books for individualized reading. But, each reading teacher needs to do the best possible to aid students individually to become increasingly literate in a complex society. Cooperation of parents is a must in helping each student to become a

good reader (Ediger, 2000, Chapter Eight).

Specifics in Reading Instruction

The successful reader tends to develop skills in specific facets of reading instruction. The following are tools for learners to use individually in developing skills needed to become good readers::

1. phonics in making appropriate phoneme/grapheme associations to identify unknown words.
2. syllabication use to divide unknown words into syllables and then synthesize to identify what was an unknown word.
3. configuration clues, by noticing the shape/form of a word to assist in recognizing unknown words.
4. context clues used to identify an unknown word by using the surrounding known words in a sentence.
5. structural analysis to notice if unknown words pattern with known words, such as initial consonant substitutions.

There are definite standards which should be used in assisting the reader to use the above five named tools of word recognition. These include the following:

1. emphasize each only if a student exhibits a need so that unknown words may be recognized in reading.
2. use the tools for word identification and not as ends in and of themselves, but rather as a means to an end.
3. provide opportunities for a student to first attempt an unknown word before giving necessary help.
4. assist students individually to become independent in word recognition when ready to do so.
5. stress fluency and meaningful understanding of content as ultimate goals in reading instruction.

How can a reading teacher meet <u>recognition</u> needs of learners when specifics such as syllabication skills are taught? When the author supervised student teachers in Melrose, Iowa in the middle 1970s, there were 13 students in a fourth grade class using a traditional work book exercise. In a one page exercise, these fourth graders were to divide words into syllables. For each numbered item responded to correctly, a learner was immediately rewarded with an imprint from a Santa Claus rubber stamp! How was this possible? With 13 students being rewarded by the student teacher and the cooperating teacher, both could take care of immediate reinforcement practices. The 6.5 fourth graders per teacher made this possible. The year before, Melrose, Iowa Schools adopted the immediate reinforce philosophy of instruction, The fourth graders were then <u>recognized</u> for each step of precise

achievement. A question arises as to how often should students be rewarded/recognized for achievement.

Holism in the Reading Curriculum

Somewhat opposite of those emphasizing selected tools be taught to students in identifying unknown words are the whole language advocates. Holism then is a key concept to emphasize in reading instruction. The following stress holism as a philosophy of teaching reading:

1. The Big Book approach in which a teacher uses a large text whereby each student can clearly see the words to be read. Background information is provided to learners for reading the ensuing contents. The teacher reads aloud the content to students and guides learners to follow the print discourse from the Big Book. Next, students read the content together with the teacher. Rereading may be done as often as desired and needed. Here, no emphasis is placed upon the tools of learning such as phonics.
2. stress is laced upon securing ideas from the printed discourse, not segmenting words.
3. with rereading of content with teacher guidance, students increasingly recognize unknown words in a holistic manner.
4. a set of basic sight words is developed and may be used to read with increased proficiency.
5. reading for enjoyment needs to be recognized and is a key concept to stress in holistic reading instruction, not drill/practice in phonics or other tools of learning to read.

A second approach in holism in reading instruction is individualized reading. Here, an adequate supply of library books needs to be available. Thus, the teacher motivates students to choose a library book on an individual basis. The learner is the chooser, not the teacher unless a student cannot settle down to read a book. After having completed reading a library book, the student has a conference with the teacher to check comprehension and oral reading skills. The students time is valuable and recognized by the teacher in a one on one relationship. Each student follows the above sequence.

Questions that may be asked pertaining to holism as a philosophy of teaching reading are the following:

1. Do students develop independence in reading skills without the teaching of word recognition skills?
2. Are holistic methods of reading instruction adequate for learners to develop a basic sight vocabulary of words to foster independence in reading subject matter?

3. Should reading instruction be based solely on student interests, such as in individualized reading?

4. Do holistic methods of reading instruction harmonize with test items for validity on state mandated tests?

5. Can research evidence be found or done to ascertain which is better-- teaching word recognition techniques or holism in the reading curriculum?

A third approach in holism procedures in reading instruction is to use the experience chart. To emphasize tenets of the experience chart, students need to

1. experience a concrete situation to obtain ideas.
2. have the teacher print ideas from students on the chalkboard. The word processor may also be used to record learner ideas.
3. see talk written down as the recording of learner ideas occurs.
4. read the recorded content aloud with teacher assistance.
5. reread aloud as often as desired (Ediger, 2000, 20-29).

How can recognition needs of learners be met with the experience chart approach in beginning reading instruction? The teacher may praise ideas given by students individually for the experience chart. Nonverbal communication may be used with appropriate smiles, facial expressions, and gestures for learner contributions in developing the experience chart. When orally reading the content together from the chart, the teacher may give oral praise for reading well.

Harmonizing Word Attack skills with Holism

Very frequently in speeches given at teacher education conventions and in educational literature, it sound as if the two approaches in the teaching of reading cannot be harmonized. However, in actual practice, the author when supervising student teachers has noticed that the two procedures are blended in numerous situations. In using the Big Book procedure, teachers ask students, "Which words do you notice on this page which have the same beginning letter?" Or which word ends the same way as does this word, such as pointing to the word "girl." Contributions from each learner need to be recognized.

In a conference setting with individualized reading in a one-on-one relationship, the teacher may ask the learner to give words that begin with "boy," which is located on a page being read aloud by the student. Or which words do you see that have a short vowel sound as in "bend?" Oral rewards such as "fine," "good," "excellent," and "great" may be used to recognize correct responses.

The experience chart lends itself very well to bringing in selected word recognition skills as the lesson progresses. Thus, the teacher may

ask how many words begin with the letter "s." Or, how many have a silent "e" ending. Both word recognition techniques and meaning in reading content can have intrinsic rewards and contributions made need recognition by peers and the teacher. How often to recognize student contributions needs to be assessed by the teacher so that each learner achieves as optimally as possible.

Very few teachers would use a pure systematic phonics approach in reading instruction. Any facet of phonics studied by students should have immediate application. Thus, for the hard "g" sound, students could give a variety of words that start like the word "game." These words may be placed in context such as in a sentence or paragraph.
Word recognition techniques taught should be placed in context, using sentences or even larger units of thought such as paragraphs. They should be taught as needed, to assist students individually to become highly functional readers. Adequate recognition of each student in reading achievement may well harmonize with developing skill in determining unknown words as well as attaching understanding to the inherent subject matter being read.

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